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**INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION**  
(of UNESCO)

**Seventeenth Session of the IOC Committee on International Oceanographic Data and  
Information Exchange (IODE), Paris, France, 3-7 March 2003**

**Reports on activities of the IODE Groups of Experts:  
IODE GROUP OF EXPERTS ON BIOLOGICAL AND CHEMICAL  
DATA MANAGEMENT AND EXCHANGE PRACTICES  
(GEBCDMEP)**

(Dr Edward Vanden Berghe, Chair GEBCDMEP)

**1. Terms of Reference of the Group**

The establishment of the IODE Group of Experts on Biological and Chemical Data Management and Exchange Practices (GEBCDMEP) was first discussed during the International Workshop on Oceanographic Biological and Chemical Data Management held in Hamburg, Germany, in May 1996. The idea was taken forward during the IODE XVI meeting in Lisbon, Portugal, 31 October-8 November 2000, where terms of reference were proposed; these were changed slightly during the first meeting of the group. The changed terms of reference now read:

- (i) Document the systems and taxonomic databases and inventories currently in use in various data centres
- (ii) Document the advantages and disadvantages of different methods and practices of compiling, managing and archiving biological and chemical data
- (iii) Develop standards and recommended practices for the management and exchange of biological and chemical data, including practices for operational biological data
- (iv) Encourage data centres to compile inventories of past and present biological and chemical data holdings
- (v) Encourage data holders to contribute data to data centres for the creation of regional and global integrated oceanographic profile and plankton databases and other biological databases

During the first session of the Group, it was noted that the composition of the GEBCDMEP was largely focussed on biological data. However, the group agreed that initial priority should be biological data management and exchange, but would seek additional expertise in chemical data management as required.

**2. Core elements of Last Session of the Group**

The first session of the group was held at the National Oceanographic Data Centre in Silver Springs, MD, USA, from 25 to 27 June 2002. The group members presented an overview of current activities in biological and chemical data management in their respective institutions. The Group discussed the need for an inventory of existing databases and agreed to define and

distribute a questionnaire to request information about documenting systems, databases and inventories. The IOC metadata system, MEDI, is currently used to describe oceanographic datasets and this system could be used to represent biological and chemical data sets. Additional keywords, such as taxonomic descriptors, may be required in MEDI. The list of taxonomic names compiled by the International Taxonomic Information System (ITIS), based at the Smithsonian Institution, was discussed as a tool to standardise species names.

The Group decided to commence planning for an international workshop that would provide a forum for scientists to be informed of the latest developments in biological and chemical data management. The date proposed for this international workshop was Spring 2004.

The summary report of the First Session of the group is available on the IODE web site: <http://ioc.unesco.org/iode/files.php?action=viewfile&fid=88&fcid=19>. The action plan is reproduced as an annex to this report.

During the 'Colour of Ocean Data (COD)' Symposium, held in Brussels from 25 to 27 November 2002, most members of the Group were present. A brief informal meeting was held. One of the points discussed was collaboration with the Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS) group, who were co-organising the COD symposium.

### **3. Group Action Plan for the Intersessional Period**

The GEBDCMEP action plan is attached as annex to this report. The main lines of action for the group are

- Preparing for a 2<sup>nd</sup> international conference on Biological and Chemical Data Management
- Documenting the systems and databases in use, and investigating the suitability of the MEDI system to capture this information

### **4. Links with other Groups**

Members of the GEBDCMEP are also represented in other Groups of Experts and Working Groups, such as GETADE, SGXML, ICES/IOC SGMEDI, and the ICES WGMDM. Representation of the Group in the JCOMM ETDMP is under discussion.

### **5. Budgetary Requirements**

Funding is required to allow Group members to allow the sessional meetings (approximately 25,000 US\$).

Some funds to sponsor scientist from developing countries to attend the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Biological and Chemical Data Management (to be held in Hamburg in Spring, 2004) would ensure an active participation from those countries. (10 participants, at an average cost of 2500 US\$, or a total of 25,000 US\$)

### **6. Source of Funding**

Funds for the sessional meetings (\$25,000) will come from IODE Regular Programme. Additional funding will come from extra-budgetary source, to be identified

## **7. Requested Actions from the Committee**

The Committee is requested to:

- Adopt the summary report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Session of the IODE Group of Experts on Biological and Chemical Data Management and Exchange Practices
- Approve funding for the concerned actions: for the period 2003-2005.

[end]

ANNEX

**ACTION PLAN FOR THE INTERSESSIONAL PERIOD**

The Group developed an Action Plan for the intersessional period based on the agreed action items arising from the meeting and assigned tasks to each member of the Group. The following Action Items were agreed:

1. Define a model for questionnaire to request information about documenting systems, databases and inventories. Group to discuss online. Document systems of the institutions represented in GE and announce the results at COD symposium in November 2002. [*Action: All*]
2. Distribute the questionnaire at the COD symposium and encourage other institutions to provide feedback. [*Action: Chair GEBCDMEP*]
3. Investigate suitability of MEDI for describing biological datasets. [*Action: Edward Vanden Berghe and Greg Reed*]
4. Chair and IOC secretariat would draft a letter to ICES, ITIS, ETI and FAO informing them of the establishment of the GEBCDMEP. This draft would be circulated to members of the Group for comment before distribution. [*Action Chair, IOC Secretariat*]
5. Start preparations for the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Symposium on Biological and Chemical Data Management to be held, possibly, in Spring 2004. Suni Wilhelms to investigate the possibility of holding the symposium in Hamburg. Syd Levitus would draft a letter of intent outlining the topics to be covered. [*Action: Sunhild Wilhelms, Sydney Levitus*]